

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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GRETCHEN.

*By the Author of "Dame Durden," "My Lord Conceit,"
"Darby and Joan," "Corinna," etc.*

BOOK I.

CHAPTER VI. WHAT HE SAID.

THROUGH her little square casement Gretchen could see the apple boughs swaying, and the broad sunshine streaming over dew-wet blossom and leaf.

She sprang up from sleep, and wondered vaguely why she was happy. Then memory came back in thronging thoughts that told of yesterday, and she hastened with glad young feet, that scarcely touched the ground, to that new world of love and light which lay beyond the long-closed garden gates. He was there—waiting.

Bari was in the background, but discreetly retired. His master could do without his aid, now.

Only when she stood face to face with the young man whom Lisschen had declared to be her lover, did Gretchen feel a little odd sense of shyness and surprise.

They shook hands, and the Englishman closed the gate, and drew her arm within his own, and led her into the heart of the woods in silence.

Indeed, he felt speech to be impossible; his heart was so full of tumult and uneasiness.

"What did you do with yourself all yesterday?" he asked, at last. "I went to the woods again, but I did not see you."

"I was in disgrace," she answered deprecatingly. "I spent the day in my own room."

"What a shame!" he cried in his indifferent German. "Your relations must be very tyrannical people."

He had heard about these same people. He had gained an insight into her life and its hidden mystery of reproach, since yesterday. His own quick fancy supplied the rest; but she herself was as unconscious of his knowledge, as of her own history.

"I told you what they were," she said with a sigh. "But I think aunt would not be so severe if it were not for Sister Maria."

"Let us sit down," he said abruptly; "I want to speak to you about your future."

She guided him to the fallen trunk of a long-felled tree—lichen-covered and moss-grown—and there they seated themselves. She drew her hand away from his arm, linked it in her other hand, and so, with head a little bent, and the soft colour coming and going in her cheeks, sat listening.

"I have only seen you twice," he said earnestly. "But I can't bear to think of you so young, and beautiful, and friendless, and condemned to such a cruel fate. Tell me, is there no one to whom you could appeal—no other relation or friend who would save you from this living grave?"

"No," she said simply. "I told you I had no one to care for me enough to give me a home. Aunt says it is best for me to go into the Convent. I have always heard that, ever since I can remember."

"But you don't wish it?"

"Oh, no. No! No!" she cried passionately. "I cannot bear the thought! It was hateful before—but now——"

She stopped suddenly. Some instinct of maidenly shyness whispered to her heart a warning. Even to a lover—it was not wise to speak too plainly.

But he did not want her to speak. He was not unversed in women's ways, and he knew well enough what lurked beneath

that half-uttered avowal. A little thrill of triumph ran through his heart. He took off the hateful glasses and bent eagerly forward, looking with longing eyes into the lovely girlish face.

"Now," he said eagerly, "you believe that there is something better in life than a gloomy faith, and a bigoted religion. Now you know that youth and beauty have been given to women for some other purpose than seclusion—immolation—self-sacrifice! Is it not so?"

"You have told me that," she answered gravely. "Perhaps I am wrong to listen to you. I am so ignorant. No one has ever spoken to me as you have done. Tell me, then, for what women live besides—besides religion?"

"For love," he said, low and passionately. "For men to worship and adore! To be wives, and mothers, and helpmates. To lift our gross natures into their own regions of purity and faith! To make the world a paradise. To give to us tired toilers a glimpse of the Heaven that lives in their own dreams. That is what God made them for—some of them—at least!"

His eyes met her own. They were soft, humid, abstracted—the eyes of a child in some sweet maze of doubt, and their innocent questioning smote him to the heart.

"Tell me, now," she said, half-timidly. "What is—Love?"

Such a question, from lips young and beautiful, and sacred yet from any lover's touch! Such a question from woman's heart to man's, while yet the blood of youth ran hot and swift through every vein, and beat in every pulse! The impulse of his heart was to take her in his arms and touch that sweet child-mouth with Love's first kiss; but something in the innocent eyes kept back the impulse, and stayed the desecrating touch. He drew a sharp, short breath, and his eyes sought the ground instead of her own fair face.

"Love?" he said. "It is not easy to tell. When it comes—we know. Before that—it is only to fancy an angel that brings perfect dreams, and wake to darkness."

"But the love you spoke of yesterday," she said, "that made the gods human, and humanity as gods. That must be beautiful. The world holds that, you said. I think I would choose such a world in preference now to what Sister Maria

tells me of that other. I must be very wicked, but I never can fancy the joys or glories of which she speaks. I try so hard, but I cannot. Now, when you speak I seem to see all you say, and I—oh! I think it would make me far, far happier to be loved, than even to be as good and as pious as Sister Maria."

She spoke with the beautiful audacity of perfect fearlessness and perfect innocence. It never occurred to her—it could not—that her words held a perilous temptation for two lives—that their unguarded simplicity was as the foundation-stone of a fabric, unstable, beautiful as any dream, but, like a dream, unreal.

Again he looked at her, and the look thrilled her as never look or word had yet held power to do. Her face grew very white, her eyes filled. The sweet air and the noise of singing birds, the soft rustle of the wind above her head, seemed to reach her in some dizzy, far-off way.

He bent towards her, and took her hand in his:

"We will not talk of Sister Maria," he said, "only of ourselves."

The colour came back to her face. She let her hand lie passive in that close, warm clasp.

"Ah, yes!" she sighed. "Tell me about yourself, your home, your life in the world. Mine must seem so simple and stupid, I wonder you care to hear of it."

"I care to hear it because it is yours," he answered tenderly. "What affects you interests me."

"But why should it?"

He smiled, and once again he looked at her.

"I will tell you of myself—yes," he said softly; "but only of myself since I have known you. I do not think I feel much interest in what goes before."

So another charmed hour went on; and she listened as Juliet listened to her Romeo—as Marguerite to Faust—as Héloïse to Abelard—as from all time to all time women will listen to the magic of lovers' tales, and hang entranced on the music of lovers' tongues.

It was he who woke to caution and remembrance first, who suggested that time had not stayed for their foolish converse, and that prudence demanded her return.

She rose at once. Her eyes were dim and dilated, her senses were lulled into a very ecstasy of dreams—beautiful, absorbed, child-like, unreal dreams, that

seemed to have changed the face of the whole world and her whole life.

In silence they walked to the gate. In silence he took her hand, and raised it to his lips.

"You will come again to-morrow?" he asked very softly.

That touch thrilled her as with some new, vague fear which, amidst all her new-found joy, spoke warningly.

"I do not know," she stammered, and looked down at the hand his lips had touched, in sweet and sudden shame. "Is it—right?"

"Right?" he echoed vaguely. "Why not right to-morrow as to-day?"

Still she hesitated; why, she could not tell. Her eyes looked at him, appealing for guidance, help, advice, but finding none. Nothing so calls forth the innate selfishness of a man's heart as the fear of losing the object of its newly-awakened interest.

"You must come," he said decidedly. "I have so many things to tell you. The time has been too short to say half. Promise you will come. Why should you be afraid?"

She lifted her bright head proudly. "I am not afraid. Why should I be?" she said with her natural fearlessness. "Only, when I have begun to be happy, it will be so much harder to turn away to gloom and sadness once again."

"And have you begun to be happy?" he asked, flushing like a girl at the unconscious confession of his power. "Then you shall not go back to gloom and sadness if I can help it. And, if so little make you happy, a little more will make you happier. And I will teach you, Gretchen, what that 'little more' is. You will come to-morrow?"

"I—I cannot promise," she cried trembling, for the passion in his eyes and in his voice terrified her.

"Yes, you can, and you must. I shall wait here till you do. Say yes, child. You are not a coquette as yet, but you play with fire as if you were. Say yes."

Her head drooped. She grew very pale, then opened the gate suddenly, and passed in. Her hands trembled, her breath came short and uneven through her parted lips.

"You would not ask me if it were wrong?" she murmured appealingly from her vantage ground. "You know so much better than I do."

"Trust me, child—it is not wrong," he

said earnestly. "I could not harm you for all the world."

"I do trust you," she said simply; "and I will come to-morrow."

She moved away, less buoyant of step than she had been yesterday—less jubilant of heart, too; for all that she knew she was happy, oh, so happy! Hitherto her heart had been like a placid stream, clear, smooth, untroubled. But to such a stream the first breath of passion is as a disturbing blast that ruffles the still, calm surface, and sets in swifter motion all its hidden currents.

The Gretchen, moving up the garden walks, with head downbent and eyes full of tender dreams, would never again ask, "What is Love?" for to her Love had come this fair spring day; come in unseen, subtle guise, to be the master of her fate—to mould or mar her life!

CHAPTER VII. DISCOVERED.

"WELL," said Lisschen sharply, looking at Gretchen's absorbed face, "has he asked thee in marriage? Is it settled?"

The girl started.

"I do not know," she said shyly. "Marriage? No, he did not speak of marriage. What haste you are in, Lisschen!"

The old woman was bustling about the kitchen preparing coffee. She gave a short grunt.

"Haste! Well, there is need of haste; though, indeed, how you are to wed anyone, guarded and spied upon as you are, I cannot tell. Still, I said I would help; and so I will. Listen, child," and she dropped her voice and came nearer. "Do you know you have to go to confession to-day?"

Gretchen started and turned pale.

"Oh, Lisschen!" she cried beseechingly, "and must I tell about the Englishman?"

"Not unless you are a fool," answered the old woman. "Keep it back for a time, and then confess if you feel it will make your soul easier. Did you whisper of love or lovers, you would be clapped into your Convent at once, with never a question of will or wish about it. When you are married, you can confess what you please."

"It must be very strange to be—married," said the girl, seating herself on the wooden bench. "Do people who love always get married, Lisschen?"

A grim smile curled the thin lips of the old woman.

"Mostly they do," she said. "They say 'tis Heaven's law. I always thought it a question of dowry myself."

"I cannot fancy myself married," the girl went on dreamily; "and are husbands better than lovers, do you fancy?"

"Of course!" grumbled the old woman. "They provide for you and work for you, instead of making silly speeches; but women—mostly young ones—prefer the lovers. And that reminds me," she added, "you must get your lover to take you to England to be married. Here he cannot satisfy the laws. It is different in his own country. A man can marry whom he pleases, without asking leave of anyone."

"Laws!" murmured the girl, vaguely. "What have laws to do with it, Lisschen?"

"Oh, that is not for me to say," answered Lisschen, shortly. "There are laws for everything here; 'tis to make life harder, I fancy. I never could get the wrongs or the rights of them myself; but then I'm simple and ignorant, and the priests tell one what to do when one is in difficulty."

"But the priests would not counsel me to marry the Englishman," said Gretchen thoughtfully.

"No, that would they not. Therefore, I say, keep your own counsel for a time, and put a good face on matters, and learn your tasks as they tell you. It will not be for very long."

"Oh, Lisschen," cried the girl suddenly, as she looked up at the old wrinkled crabbed face, "do you know that if—now—I had to give up this hope—if I never saw him again—if I had to enter the Convent, it would kill me. I could not bear it. I should pray to Heaven to let me die!"

"Hush!" cried the old woman warningly. "Somebody is coming. Begone into the parlour. It is not well that you should be seen here."

Thicker and thicker the tangled webs of deceit were weaving themselves about the girl's life. From one trivial concealment how much had sprung! how much had yet to spring!

The day passed on in its usual dreary routine. The dreaded hour of confession came and went. Thanks to Lisschen's advice and the priest's own knowledge of her secluded and rigorous life, she managed to escape question, or suspicion.

But she felt terribly guilty and unhappy all the same, and even her new, sweet secret lost some of its charm.

That night she slept ill, and was restless

and feverish; but, all the same, she was up and out as the clock struck five. No one was waiting at the gate as she let herself through, and a little thrill of fear ran through her heart, as she thought that something might have chanced to keep her lover from his appointment. She called him that in the most natural and innocent manner. Lisschen had said so, and it seemed but right and natural to continue the appellation.

Moment after moment passed. The sunlight fell through the leaves, the birds were singing loudly and gaily among the branches, but for once the sunlight and the song were dull and meaningless to her. She listened for a step on the grass, a voice in her ear, that should bring back the glory and the music once again.

At last the gate swung back. A voice called to her softly:

"You have been waiting? I am so sorry!"

He reached her side in a moment, and took her hand in greeting. "Can you forgive me? The truth is I overslept myself, and that tiresome man never called me."

"I am so glad you have come," she said frankly, "I feared you were ill."

"And you were sorry—you hoped I would be here?" he asked softly.

"Oh yes," she said gravely and seriously. "You see it is pleasant to have someone to talk to besides Lisschen; and I should miss you very much now—though, indeed, I don't know why I should, for I have only seen you three times in all."

"Yes," he said smiling. "But we know each other very well for all that, Gretchen, do we not? You see I call you Gretchen. And I want you to call me by my name. Will you?"

"What is it?" she asked.

"Neale—Neale Kenyon. Can you get your little foreign tongue round that, do you think? I should like to teach you English, child. Would you learn?"

"I would learn anything you taught me," said Gretchen simply. "And that is not a hard name to say—Neale—for I can pronounce it quite easily. Yes, I should like to learn English. You know my father was of your nation."

"Ah, true," he answered, and his brow clouded suddenly.

It occurred to him sharply, like a reproach, that he wished he had not seen this girl; or that, having seen her, it was possible to forget the childish, dimpled

beauty of the young face, and the waking soul that looked out now from those lovely eyes. "Perhaps her mother's eyes were like them," he said to himself, and then he remembered Bari's story, and felt thankful that he at least was not a villain like that mother's betrayer.

"Come," he said at last, shaking off these gloomy thoughts with an effort, "let us sit down again; I want to talk to you. Tell me, have you thought of me at all since we parted yesterday?"

"But—yes," she said with all seriousness. "How could I help it? Do you know that for you I committed a great sin?"

"A sin—you?" he echoed incredulously. "I should like to hear it."

"I withheld a true confession from Father Joseph," she said slowly. "It is very wicked, but I dared not tell him of you, or I should never be allowed to see you again."

The young man's lips curled with faint contempt. He had nothing in common with priesthood and superstition.

"You were quite right," he said indignantly. "What business has one human being to arrogate to himself the right of knowing the secrets of another's heart, the feelings of another's soul? Do not say anything of me, Gretchen, to anyone until I give you leave. Promise me that."

"I promise," she said readily. "Indeed I do not wish to speak of you to anyone else. I like only to think of you to myself."

"You innocent child," he said tenderly. "I wonder if you would care very much if you never saw me again? Tell me."

"Care," she echoed dreamily, "I cannot tell if I would 'care.' It would be a great chill blank, and the old life would close over me—and I—I should pray to Heaven to let me die. That is all."

"All!" he said, half glad, half shamed at the innocent confession, and yet proud of the love he had awakened for himself. "It is too much, child, far too much. And why should you care like that when you know me so little?"

She shook her head.

"I cannot tell. As you say, it is strange, for I have seen you but three times, and I have known Lisschen, and aunt, and grandfather all my life, and yet——"

"And yet—would you leave them for me, did I ask it?" he said hurriedly.

"Leave them?" Her eyes grew troubled and fell beneath his own. "I do not know what you mean."

He drew her towards him as he might have drawn a child, and his lips lightly touched her hands.

"Look in my eyes, Gretchen," he whispered. "I think you do know what I mean."

She lifted the long lashes shyly, questioning, and for a moment met that eager, burning gaze. Then the colour rushed in a glowing tide over cheek and brow and throat. She had learned her lesson, and he knew it.

"Ah, child," he murmured, and drew her closer yet to his beating heart. "But yesterday you asked me what was love; to-day you can give me the answer for yourself. Or stay, we do not need words, you and I. This—shall teach it you."

Softly his lips touched her own—the little flower-like velvet mouth that never yet had felt the touch of any lover's kiss.

In that moment something reverent, pitiful, chivalrous, stirred his heart, and purged away the dross of grosser passions. In that moment she was sacred to him, and he would no more have whispered thought or word of harm to her, than have struck her with a blow.

As for her she leant there against his heart, rapt in a very ecstasy of wonder. A light came over her face, changing all its childish youth into glory—changing it as daybreak changes earth and sky. The colour that had flushed her cheeks crept upwards to the golden ripples of her hair, and she trembled like a leaf in his arms.

But she was not frightened or ashamed, only glad with a gladness that made her senses reel, and set the sunny leaves into mazy circles, and made the blue sky swim before her sight, and lifted her heart, her soul, her very being, on the strong, swift current of its unintelligible happiness to bear her—so it seemed—into the very courts of Paradise.

Moments passed, filled only by broken words. Great joy is never prolific of expression. Gretchen still nestled there as naturally as a child who has found a resting-place, and listened entranced to her lover's broken murmurs.

"I have so often heard of people falling in love at first sight. . . . I can't say I ever believed in it. But my whole life has changed since the moment I lifted the bandage from my eyes and saw you sitting on that bank with the daisies in your lap. . . . Do you remember, dear? That look set the wheels of Fate moving

rapidly enough. I think you have never been out of my thoughts a single moment since. And yet what a child you are, and how ignorant of your power! But you love me, Gretchen, and love will make a woman of you, as it did of your namesake with the daisies. . . . is it not so?"

"Who was she?" asked Gretchen innocently. "And was she fond of daisies too?"

"Yes," he answered somewhat hurriedly, feeling no desire to repeat that ill-omened tale. "She was in love, and she asked the daisies if her lover was true?"

"The daisies could not know."

He smiled.

"Of course not, sweetheart. But she asked them all the same. Her heart gave the answer."

"And that was——"

"That he loved her passionately, wholly, entirely, as I love you, Gretchen."

"Ah," sighed the girl, raising her heavy lids, "how happy she must have been!"

"Not happier than you, or anyone who loves, my child. It is an old story; but we each think it new when it comes to ourselves."

"It is very new to me," she said with a faint sigh, "for no one has ever loved me. I wonder why you do," she added, drawing a little away from his arms and looking up with soft and puzzled eyes to his face.

"I cannot tell you," he said tenderly.

"Perhaps because you are so fair, and sweet, and look so true; perhaps because you love me; perhaps—and best reason of all—because I can't help myself. Don't puzzle your innocent heart for reasons, sweetheart; accept the fact."

She shook her head.

"I shall never think it anything but wonderful," she said seriously. "You, who are so clever, who know everything and have seen so much, to care for a little ignorant child! Perhaps," she added sorrowfully, "you will be sorry one day. There must be beautiful women in your world, and great and clever women too."

"So there are," he said smilingly. "But I know none with an innocent soul such as yours, Gretchen, and none with that look which lives in your eyes and springs from the purest of pure sources. And so I love you, dear, and that must content you; for no man could say more even were his heart fuller than my own."

"There is no need to say more," answered the girl, and raised her drooping face and looked at him with those deep,

haunting eyes. "But I shall never cease to think how wonderful, and oh, how good it is of you to love me!"

A little sob broke the faltering words. Her full heart scarce could bear its new weight of joy. Then, swift as thought, her face paled, she sprang to her feet with eyes dilated and full of a terrible fear. Her hands fell to her side.

"Look!" she cried in a strange, stifled voice. "It is—grandfather!"

Neale Kenyon rose also to his feet. Some few yards off a solitary figure stood, stern, fierce, wrathful of face—the figure of a man old in years and prejudices, and pitiless of heart and nature. One look told so much of his history to the young Englishman; one look, and then Gretchen was snatched from his side, and all the bitterest and most terrible invectives of the Teutonic tongue were hissing from those white and trembling lips.

Neale Kenyon could not stem the torrent, so he waited patiently until it should have exhausted itself. Then he spoke simply, coolly, to the point.

"Sir, I love your granddaughter. It is true that I am not as yet acquainted with yourself, but I should have called to lay my proposals before you in proper form. I am not sufficiently acquainted with German etiquette to know how or why I have erred in speaking to her. If you will permit me to call or explain——"

The torrent broke out again:

"Explain! Himmel! no puppy of an Englishman shall set foot in my house! Explain, what is there to explain? Nothing! The girl is not for any man's love. She is vowed to the Church, and to the Church she shall go. Explain! Could temerity and insolence go further? These dogs of Englishmen think they are to have things all their own way!" and so on, with shaking hands and furious tongue, and a whirlwind of passionate gestures that fairly stunned and bewildered Neale Kenyon.

It was in vain that he attempted to speak, in vain that he asked for a moment's patience. The old man waved him imperiously back, and seizing poor little sobbing, trembling Gretchen by the arm, dragged her away in a fury of wrath and indignation.

The young Englishman stood there almost stunned with the suddenness of these events:

"What am I to do?" he muttered, pacing to and fro the little glade where

his love-story had been so ruthlessly interrupted. "Good Heavens, what a brute the man is! Poor child—poor little innocent! Will they force her into the Convent now, as revenge? What a dilemma! What on earth am I to do?"

"Monsieur is in trouble!" said the soft, silky voice of his attendant in his ear. "I saw the angry grandfather, and the young lady sobbing as if her heart would break. It is all then discovered."

"Oh, Bari," cried Neale Kenyon distractedly, "tell me, my good fellow, how one can pacify a German bear. That poor child, what will become of her?"

The Italian shrugged his shoulders.

"It is like the comedies they play—parted lovers, angry guardians, and so on. You must do also as the lover in the play—circumvent them, Monsieur."

"Yes, but how?" asked the young Englishman gloomily.

The Italian looked at him with something very like contempt.

"How? There is always a way when one loves. Time will show. And we have a friend in the citadel fortunately. The good and ugly Lisschen will inform us of what goes on; but Monsieur had better prepare for flight. The gentlemen of the black robe do not like wolves to meddle with their lambs, and it will have to end in robbing the sheep-fold, I fear."

The young man threw himself down on the fallen tree, and groaned aloud. "I wish I had never come here. I wish I had never seen her—no, I don't wish that. I can't give her up, Bari, that's impossible; and yet I don't see how I can marry her."

The Italian looked at him with his dark, keen eyes and smiled. "Monsieur wishes to marry the young lady? Monsieur is not aware of the many complicated rules and laws appertaining to civil contracts. Besides, there is the insurmountable barrier—difference of religion, and—what of the young English lady to whom Monsieur is engaged?"

"I am not engaged," was the fierce answer. "Mind your own business, Bari. I am free to marry whom I choose, and I never cared for Miss Kenyon, and she knows it. But about this young lady—something must be done, and at once. Can you get speech of the old woman and hear what has happened? You say she took kindly to bribes: promise her anything—anything—a hundred pounds, if you like, if she will only help us. The

child must not be left to the tender mercies of that crew. Do you hear, Bari?"

"I hear, Monsieur; I will do my best. If it is a question of German brains against my own, I do not fear the results. They are heavy, ponderous, speculative, but they know not—finesse!"

FESTAL CAKES.

CONFECTIONS of flour have, at all times and among all nations, had a conspicuous place in the performance of social and religious rites, and England would seem to be specially remarkable for the number of such feasts. There is scarcely an English county without its special cake; certainly there are few festal occasions unmarked by its consumption in some form. The daily event of marriage gives one opportunity to cake makers, and, in this case the cake is so important that it is strange so few ladies seek to know the origin and meaning of the sugary structures, before which they find themselves on the eventful day. The gorgeous and indigestible bride-cake of to-day is eaten in deference to the rules of conventionality; but it once had a poetical significance which it may be interesting to recall. For the modern wedding-cake is but the glorified descendant of the Roman loaf, which was broken by the newly-made husband before the priests of Jove in the presence of the citizens, and eaten with his wife, in token that thereafter they were to share each other's goods and be dependent on each other for comfort and subsistence.

It will be generally found that many of the cakes eaten at different seasons, in different places, bear some sort of resemblance to each other, and that the interior of an ordinary mince-pie is one of the most favourite bases for these confections. "God-cakes," which stand first on the list of commemorative dainties, being the fare chosen for New Year's Day in Coventry and various other parts of England, are of this nature. They are triangular in form; but by no means of the deceptive character of a three-cornered puff, whose hollowness and general delusiveness, as regards its interior, is eminently calculated to impress upon the youthful mind the melancholy fact that things are not what they seem. They are moderately thick, and should have a lining of at least the same dimensions. Like the Simnel, they vary in size according to the price; some being sold on New Year's Day, in the streets of Coventry, at two a

penny, whilst others are manufactured of a size and richness which render them a worthy gift for the festive season.

Of much more gastronomic and general importance is the next cake festival, occurring on the Feast of the Epiphany, or Twelfth Night, though the custom has much declined of recent years, Birch's famous shop being no longer remarkable for its display, while Baddeley's bequest to the performers at Drury Lane Theatre has been so elaborated that the cake itself dwindles into insignificance.

From the most remote period of Christianity it had been customary to commemorate the Three Kings by indulgence in a pleasantry called the Election of Kings by Bean, a practice probably adapted, like many other Christian ceremonies, from some Pagan custom, perhaps from that observed by Roman children, who, at the end of their Saturnalia, drew lots, with beans, to see who should be King. Subsequently, in England, the idea was conceived of inserting the bean in a cake, a similar practice prevailing in France.

Under the Stuarts, the innocent cake celebration was made an excuse for costly and boisterous Court festivals, at which gambling was a great feature. One of the naval chaplains of Charles the Second, speaking of a Twelfth Night party aboard ship, says: "Wee had a great kake made, in which was put a beane for the King, a pease for the Queen, a cloave for the Knave, etc. The kake was cut into several pieces in the great cabin, and all put into a napkin, out of which everyone took his piece, as out of a lottery; then each piece is broken to see what was in it, which caused much laughter, and more to see us tumble one over the other in the cabin by reason of the ruff weather."

The pancake, eaten, as everyone knows, on the day prior to the beginning of Lent, is a decided landmark in the calendar, and may, perhaps, be regarded as an indication of the coming spring. It is curious to observe with what energy everyone addresses himself to the consumption of these cakes on Shrove Tuesday, as if some important religious ceremony were being performed. Pancakes have been associated with this day from time immemorial, though of their origin, as a suitable refectation for Shrove-tide, there is no evidence. "As fit as a pancake"—for which expression Shakespeare's clown in *All's Well that Ends Well* is responsible—seems to have been a general term, though whether to

have obtained this distinction is greater than to be favourably compared to a fiddle, is a point as yet undecided. Taylor, the sweet singer of the Thames, quaintly alludes to this Shrove-tide custom. "There is a thinge called wheaten floure," he says, "which the cooks do mingle with water, eggs, spice, and other tragical and magical enchantments, and then they put by little and little into a frying-pan of boiling suet, where it makes a confused, dismal hissing (like the Lermian snakes in the reeds of Acheron), until at last, by the skill of the cook, it is transformed into the form of a flip-jack, called a pancake, which ominous incantation the people do devour very greedily." In Elizabeth's time, the Eton College cook fastened a pancake to the school knocker on Shrove Tuesday; and at Westminster on that day the practice of tossing a pancake still prevails. The cook, entering the schoolroom, hurls the pancake aloft, and the boy who catches it unbroken carries it to the deanery, and receives an honorarium of a pound.

Following close upon the eating of the Carnival dainties comes the Simnel Festival, peculiar to Mid-Lent, or Mothering Sunday, or, as it is also called, Refreshment Sunday. As pancakes are used as the sign of festivity before the austerities of the Fast season commences, so the Simnel marks the relaxation permitted at Mid-Lent. Evidently the usage of Simnel cakes is of great antiquity. The name is probably derived from "simila," fine flour, the term "simanellus" among the mediæval writers being used to denote a cake. There are, however, many legends respecting the origin of the name; and in Shropshire especially, where the Simnel is a great institution, the explanations are as varied as they are curious. One is that the father of Lambert Simnel was a baker who made these cakes. In consequence of his son's notoriety, persons were in the habit of visiting his shop for the ostensible purpose of purchasing cakes, but in reality to see the Pretender's home and relations; and in time the cakes bought of the old man were called by his name, though by philological analogy, it is more likely that the baker was named after his cakes.

The favourite tale, however, is that of an old Shropshire couple named Nelly and Simon, who were expecting their children to visit them at the close of Lent. Wishing to celebrate the occasion, Nelly took the unleavened dough left from the Lenten baking and made a deep crust shape,

wherein she put the remains of the Christmas plum-pudding. Then the question arose as to how it should be cooked. Simsaid it should be boiled, Nelly maintained that it should be baked. This led to a domestic quarrel, and having exhausted her stock of abuse, Mistress Nelly seized the wooden stool whereon she sat and hurled it at Sim's head, whilst he playfully retaliated with a broom. Finally the matter was compromised, and the cake was first boiled and afterwards baked, the result being so satisfactory that the cakes became popular, and were called Sim-Nel, compounded after Mr. Lewis Carroll's manner, of portions of the two words Simon and Nelly. The cakes, as they are now eaten, are certainly prepared in this way. The crust, a deep battlemented confection of fine flour and water, coloured a deep yellow, being filled with a rich compound of the mincemeat and plum-pudding order, is criss-crossed with peel, made very stiff, tied in a cloth, and boiled for several hours. After this it is well brushed over with egg and baked, until it reaches such a degree of hardness that one can quite believe the story of the lady who, on receiving one as a present, mistook it for a footstool, and used it as such. On Mid-Lent Sunday there was an ancient observance in which this sweet cake played a most conspicuous part. This was the annual visiting of parents on this day. Hence the title of "Mothering" Sunday, and as such an event required the necessary elements of festivity, it was customary for the young folks to bring the sweet cakes as a species of filial offering, and the basis of a feast. Herrick sings:

I'll to thee a Simnel bring,
'Gainst thou go a-mothering;
So that, when she blesses thee,
Half that blessing thou'll give me.

That some religious significance was attached to the eating of these cakes at this season in early times is evident from the fact that they were marked with figures of the Virgin, and sometimes with the emblems of the Passion. Consecrated cakes at religious festivals were common enough among the Teutonic races, being, of course, but the survival of the Pagan customs. Our Good Friday buns, which come next in the cake calendar, and are eaten in supposed pious commemoration of one of the greatest events in the Christian tragedy, are, strange to say, only an adapted form of a very questionable entertainment wherein the heathen Saxons indulged in

honour of their goddess Eastre. The Christian clergy, finding that, with the adoption of the new faith, the converts were by no means disposed to abolish the festivities connected with heathen rites, sought to compromise matters by permitting the feasting under other names, and with the buns stamped with Christian signs. Egyptian worshippers, too, had their bun, which, in many respects, seems to have been an ancestor of ours, being horned, to symbolise the sacred heifer, "bous," or, in its inflected form, "boun," whence, perhaps, our word.

In China, Mexico, parts of India, and other countries, the deities are worshipped with cakes, but, curiously enough, in continental Roman Catholic countries, Good Friday is not commemorated by the hot cross-bun. Old customs die hard in this country, but the cross-bun seems certainly to be declining in favour. Its quality is by no means what it was in the days of the "Royal" bun houses, and we are inclined to think that this has as much affected their popularity as any other reason.

Tansy cakes and tansy puddings, where-with the joys of Eastertide are celebrated, are of a less substantial and indigestible character than their predecessors, the cakes being about an eighth of an inch thick and seven inches in diameter, white in colour, and having a mingled flavour of sweet and bitter. This is symbolical of the bitter herbs commanded at the Paschal Feast, and of the sweetness of its joys. In the Southern Counties tansies are carried round by the parish clerk as an Easter offering; and in return for these cakes, which are distributed after service on Good Friday, it is customary to make a small present of money, according to one's means. Anciently, when ball-playing was one of the special features of Eastertide, ecclesiastics, both high and low, indulged in the pastime in the churches, tansy cakes being the prize. Sometimes the dignitaries had a dance and a game of ball during the singing of the antiphon, after which priests and choristers retired to the refectories to consume gammon of bacon and tansies. In the parish of Biddenden in Kent, there is an endowment for the distribution of cakes to poor persons on Easter Sunday afternoon. The cakes are impressed with two female figures, supposed to represent widows, "as the general objects of a charitable institution."

During the summer months, when there

are no events to commemorate, digestion is given time to recover; but the first possible occasion is snatched at by the Northern folk, and we accordingly find November the fifth celebrated through the North country as a cake festival, "Parkin," a confection of coarse oatmeal and treacle, somewhat similar to gingerbread, being the special dainty. Then comes the great festival of mince-pies and plum-puddings. Mince-pies were in great favour as early as 1596 in this country, but they were then known as shred, or Christmas pies, the latter name being the most usual. It will be remembered that the self-approving Jack Horner was eating a dainty thus described when he uttered the famous remark; and Dr. Parr, on being asked once by a lady when it was correct to commence eating mince-pies, replied: "Begin on O. Sapientia; but please to say Christmas pie, not mince-pie." The Puritans had a fervent horror of Christmas pies—

The high-shoe lords of Cromwell's making
Were not for dainties—roasting, baking;
The chiefest food they found most food in
Was rusty bacon and bag-pudding;
Plum broth was popish, and mince-pie—
Oh, that was flat idolatry!

Subsequently the Society of Friends placed their veto upon them, and even some Church folk at one time demurred at their consumption by the clergy; in reference to which Bickerstaffe wrote: "The Christmas pie is, in its own nature, a kind of consecrated cake, and a badge of distinction; and yet it is often forbidden the Druid of the family. Strange that a sirloin of beef, whether boiled or roasted, when entire is exposed to the outmost depredations and invasions, but if minced into small pieces and tossed up with plumbs and sugar, it changes its property, and forsooth is meat for his master."

Plum-pudding scarcely comes under the title of festal cakes, having had its origin in plum-porridge, a compound of meat, raisins, currants, cloves, mace, ginger, prunes, and brown bread, and being, even in its present form, scarcely of cake-like character. Yet its consumption marks a festival, and, as a commemorative confection, its mention may not be out of place. Just as the Twelfth Night celebration brings with it the initial cake of a new year, so the feast for the dying year's obsequies is furnished by the Christmas plum-pudding; and the annual consumption of the latter dainty amid all the gay and genial associations with which it is

surrounded, may be regarded as a gentle reminder of the insatiable and resistless appetite of "Time, the devourer of things."

A RUN TO SANDRINGHAM.

I TOOK a run down to Sandringham the other day, to enjoy the fine air and to see the latest improvements. If you are staying at Lynn, or if you are sojourning at Hunstanton, the latest and most breezy of the Norfolk watering-places, the distance to be traversed is only some half dozen miles by rail and between two and three by road. During the absence of the Royal family the place may be seen every Tuesday and Friday. One or two practical hints to the intending visitor may be useful. He should write to Mr. Beck, the agent at Sandringham, for an order. If he omits to do this, he will have to make a further walk to Mr. Beck's abode, a pretty and interesting walk. I should recommend him to come by Wolferton and return by Dersingham, or vice versa. Wolferton is rather the nearest, and is the station invariably used by the Royal family. There is a new portico to the station expressly built for the Prince and his people, and in a few yards you pass through the gates of his domain. The estate consists of some eleven thousand acres, which stretch from the Hall down to the sea-side, to the beach of the Wash. The park is only a small part of the estate, and beyond the park are the gardens, which are comparatively small but in exquisite taste. Walking on the turf adjoining the road, you startle the rabbits that everywhere scurry away at your approach; all around are "the innumerable ear and tail." You come to a spot where four roads meet, and you must be very careful that you turn neither to the right hand nor to the left, but keep straight on. You must leave on the left a pleasant house, called "The Folly," where sometimes some Sandringham visitors stay when the Hall is overflowing with guests. As you come nearer on, the wayside turf is broader; the wide-foliaged timber thickens, and throws a more massive shade. You pass by the revolving gates that introduce you to the path leading to the church. You see the pretty house assigned to Lieut.-General Probyn, Controller of the Household. Then you come to the beautiful Norwich gates, among the most beautiful in the world, stately with many armorial bearings. There

is a fine broad avenue of trees between the gates and the mansion, but it is rather a pity that it is such a short one. Right in front, at first through a forest avenue, stretches the road to Dersingham, a village about a mile off, with a railway station two miles beyond that.

I am afraid the Prince seldom sees the beauty of Sandringham at the time when it is most beautiful. He comes down in November for the shooting, and then he celebrates his birthday. One night he entertains all the grand people at a dance, and the next night he entertains his tenants and ever so many of the Norfolk farmers. It is not at all difficult for any respectable Norfolk farmer and his womenkind to get an invitation for a Sandringham. The Prince and Princess and their children are positively adored in the neighbourhood. The people about will tell you that the Princess is the finest lady in the world, and that there never were such young ladies as her daughters. As for the Prince of Wales, he will enter into free conversation with the poorest labourer he may meet. The people like to look at him while he takes his very constant walks. During his absence the big Norwich gates are kept closed. They are open every evening about seven o'clock. Then a big policeman stands by them, a mail cart rattles up with letters, and they are closed once more.

The visitors make for the dairy, the stables, the kennels, the lawn-tennis court, the model farm. The Norfolk folk tell you that they often have given them a delicious draught of milk at the dairy. The Princess's new tea-room, or Strasburg room there, is especially admired, filled with precious presents that she has received. You go off to the kennels. The dogs seem wild with delight to receive human beings. They climb up to the bars and lick your hands or receive a caress. There are dogs of all sorts and sizes—a menagerie well worth inspection. There are Esquimaux dogs, St. Bernard dogs, retrievers, collies, spaniels, terriers—any number of them—and some scarce varieties. There are monkeys, I believe, somewhere about, but I did not see them. There is a bear-pit, with a pair of shaggy bears; the biggest shows a wonderful alacrity in climbing, and will yield to no bear, not even to the bears of Berne, in his powers of catching.

We come back from the Bachelors' Lodge, where the young Princes will put up, or occasional guests from the Hall. The lake,

some three acres in extent, is quite an aviary in its way. There is a choice collection of scarce water-fowl. The garden has its botanical merits. Many of the trees have their scientific names labelled. You pass one to which there is a description attached, stating that it was planted by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1885. You ascend by some steps to the lawn tennis court. There are lovely lounging chairs for the lookers-on.

There is a great show of araucarias about. Everywhere you perceive that the Prince is served both with zeal and love; he is the kind of good master who makes good servants. The pagoda, or Chinese temple, is covered with curious fancy tiles, and contains a bronze idol enthroned on a monolith of granite. The path leading to the pagoda is lined by trees, most of which have been planted by relatives, friends, and guests of the Prince. The pagoda is near to the Norwich gates. The compartments of these gates are worthy of very careful study by those who are artistically disposed. The leaves of vine and clusters of grapes; the leaves of brier-rose, oak, and convolvulus; the heraldic animals supporting shields; have all been wrought by the workmen from Nature with marvellous fidelity and effect. The kitchen gardens occupy about fifteen acres, half of which are on the other side of the high road, and are rich in garden fruit and hot-house products.

We will now look a little more closely at Sandringham. It was formerly thought that the word denoted the sandy soil; but it is more probably the "ham," or house of the Sandringas, an Anglian family that settled here. In Domesday Book it appears as Sant Dirsingham. It was bought, in 1862, for nearly a quarter of a million, by the Prince of Wales, out of the accumulations of the Duchy of Cornwall, from the Hon. C. Spencer Cowper, at a price which land would certainly not fetch at the present time, and was considered a high price a quarter of a century ago. The country all round is sandy and heathy, with much fern and young plantation. The Prince of Wales is an incessant planter; and planting may be called a favourite, and certainly it is a most useful, hobby of his. Besides the wild land, there is much rich meadow and pasture, much woodland, and salt marshes frequented by many rare water-fowl, snipe, and woodcock. We need not speak of partridges and pheasants. The Prince has also introduced blackcock and red deer.

I noticed in the park, near Sandringham Cottage, some white deer, such as I have not seen elsewhere in English parks. Visiting lately the beautiful park of the King of Denmark, five miles out of Copenhagen, I noticed a great number of similar white deer, and my impression is that the Sandringham white deer are an importation from Denmark.

It was found impossible to use or to restore the house, and it was accordingly rebuilt on the same site. It is in the Elizabethan style, with red brick piles, with stone mouldings and dressings. The workmen in front of the house were very busy, apparently with drains, which must be a constant source of nervousness to the Royal inhabitants. The house has been enlarged by a spacious ball-room and other rooms. The utmost attention has been paid in regard both to fire and water. On the suggestion of Captain Shaw, of the London Fire Brigade, the building was cut into sections by means of iron doors, so that no fire might spread. The water-works are of a very remarkable character. The water-tower is a conspicuous object for many miles round. The source is a chalk spring in the Den Beck Wood. It runs through stone-ware pipes to the pumping station, where the water, which has a natural hardness of seventeen degrees, is softened, by Clark's process, to six degrees. The pumps can deliver a gallon every second.

We go into the church of Sandringham. There are, in fact, three churches connected with the Sandringham estate, all of which are in their turn visited by the Prince of Wales. Sandringham is, in point of fact, the home church, the private chapel of the great house. We believe that the Prince's Hall and houses constitute the entire parish. The mother church is West Newton, which has been beautifully restored, and there is also the parish church of Wolferton. The Prince by no means goes regularly to Sandringham Church. If he did, the little church would be thoroughly crowded out by the mob of tourists. This is the inconvenience which his Royal mother experienced at Crathie. Moreover, a crush to see his family would lead to much inattention and irreverence. The consequence is, that it is never known which church the Prince and Princess and their children will attend. The Prince will frequently attend the evening service at one or other of these churches. Sandringham is rather a diffi-

cult parish, I should say. Besides West Newton and Sandringham, there is a third church "in the marsh;" and for the three churches only two clergymen, the Rector and his Curate. Wolferton, of course, is a distinct parish. This church also is just on the point of being fully restored.

The main attractions are, of course, with Sandringham. It is a very pretty rustic church, but more decorated and adorned than is the manner of rustic churches. There is a side entrance, and a very handsome lych-gate, through which the Royal family pass on their way to church. As they do so, they are within sight of the beautiful grassy grave, surrounded by marble, of the infant Prince whose life was measured by a day. The church has a strongly memorial character. It was restored by Lady Harriet Cowper, the wife of the first owner, in remembrance of their child. It contains a stained-glass window in remembrance of the infant child of the Prince and Princess. There is a stained-glass window in remembrance of Colonel Grey, who died at Sandringham; and there is a brass in remembrance of the late Rector, Mr. Onslow. There is a beautiful tablet in remembrance of the Princess Alice, with a marble medallion portrait, by Boehm, "and erected by her devoted and sorrowing brother, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales." The fine organ was presented by the Prince. The splendid brass eagle lectern was presented by the Princess as a thank-offering for the recovery of her husband from his dangerous illness. There are several other points well worth noticing in the church; the sculptured figure of the guardian angel; the reredos of mosaic tiles, representing the vine and its clusters; and the new font with a tall crocketed cover that dates back to the time of Henry the Seventh. The rectory is a pleasant house, with smooth turf and fine timber. Within recent years the Prince has considerably enlarged the edifice, and we believe has augmented the value of the benefice. The living is consolidated of several parishes. According to Crawford's "Clerical Directory," the Rev. F. A. J. Hervey is Rector of Sandringham-with-West-Newton, Rector of Babingley, and Vicar of Appleton. The reverend gentleman is not so great a pluralist. The population of the four parishes is about five hundred, and the value, with benefices, falls considerably short of the number of souls in comparison with the number of pounds.

The village of West Newton, which is conjoined with Sandringham, the house excepted, is hardly inferior to it in interest. There is a handsome residence, in the Swiss-cottage style, used for the accommodation of extra guests. To a great extent the Prince of Wales has created the village. He has erected the Alexandra Cottages, near the church of West Newton; the Louise Cottages; and the Victoria Cottages, on the Lynn Road. Each cottage stands in a garden of about a quarter of an acre. His Royal Highness now holds the whole of the parish, and nearly the whole of the inhabitants of this pretty village are in his employ. The Prince has enlarged the park by diverting the road and taking down the old mill. He has also thoroughly restored the church, which now possesses much architectural beauty. The church is remarkable for the number and splendour of the gifts that have been presented to it. The Queen gave the organ; the Princess Louise the painted west window; the Duke of Edinburgh the carved oak stalls; the Crown Prince and Princess of Prussia the jewelled brass cross; the Duke of Connaught the mosaic tile work; the Duke of Cambridge and his mother the altar-cloth; and the Bishop of Norwich the Bible and Prayer Book. The personal friends of the Prince have also made handsome contributions.

As for the little parish of Appleton, it only contains one farm and four cottages; and its sovereignty is divided between the Prince and Lord Leicester. The famous Pastons had a handsome mansion here, which was burnt down one hundred and eighty years ago, and never rebuilt.

Babingley almost entirely consists of swampy meadows, through which a rivulet meanders to the Wash. We may still discover the shaft of a roadside cross of the fourteenth century. The church stands in the marshy meadows, and is said to occupy the site of the first Christian church ever erected in the county. There is only one farm-house in the parish. There used to be five, but the Princess, with her customary charity, converted others into a hospital for the use of people suffering from illness on the Sandringham estate.

Hunstanton is the nearest watering-place. Thither the Prince and Princess occasionally resort, and there is an excellent convalescent hospital, which is called by their name and fostered by their care. But all through the county you find traces of their presence and their usefulness.

The Reverend Mr. Russell, the famous sporting parson of Devon, used to give interesting accounts of several visits which he made to Sandringham, and of the private life of the place. These have been collected into an interesting volume. Mr. Russell was one of the boldest riders of the West Country, and had indeed been Master of Fox Hounds for a time. When a young man he would ride from seventy to a hundred miles in a day to visit his sweetheart. The Prince of Wales invited him to Sandringham, and told him to put a sermon in his pocket. In a double sense the Prince "gave him a mount." He proved nearly as good a preacher as he was a rider, and he did not feel that there was any inconsistency between the two positions. He used to boast that on one occasion he danced the old year out and the new year in with the Princess. "There is no one else but yourself who can say that," said the Princess. He had to apologise more than once for addressing H.R.H. as "my dear," which was most graciously condoned. He described how assiduous the Prince was in his personal attentions to his guests, and, when he could discover that they had any special tastes, took great care that they should be met. The great drawback was that when the house was very full of guests, the Prince was no longer able to give the same special attention. The whole view of the inner life of Sandringham is most charming, and gives the idea of an eminently English and well-ordered home.

PARVULA.

A TINY, tiny little bud,
With flaxen curls and eyes of blue;
And arch and ever-smiling lips,
That rival roses in their hue.

A tiny, tiny little trot,
With pattering, restless, active feet;
With arms held out, as she her "dad"
Across the floor starts forth to meet.

A tiny, tiny little grave,
Where, hidden from our loving sight,
Our darling sleeps beneath the turf,
O'er-sprinkled with the daisies white.

A little, little span of time,
And we to her, we trust, shall go;
Where all Earth's tears are wiped away,
And none shall grief or sorrow know!

SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY.

IF one saint more than another may be said to hold the fate of lovers in his hand, it is he whose memory is still kept green on the fourteenth of February — Bishop

Valentine. This saint, history tells us, was cruelly beaten with clubs and afterwards beheaded, A.D. 270, by order of Claudius the Second, for succouring the martyrs under the Emperor's persecutions. How he first came to be the guardian saint of lovers it is almost impossible now to say, unless, as Archbishop Wheatley has it, in his "Illustrations to the Prayer Book," it be that "he was a man of most admirable parts, and was so famous for his love and charity that the custom of choosing Valentines upon his festival (which is still practised) took its form from thence." Probably the day of his death may have something to do with his amorous powers, for, on the fourteenth of February, rustics in our country believe that birds begin to choose their mates. Chaucer wrote:

Nature, the vicare of the Almighty Lord,
That hote, colde, hevie, light, moist, and drie,
Hath knit by even number of accord,
In easie voice began to speak and say—
"Foules, take hede of my sentence, I pray,
And for your own ease in fordering your need,
As fast as I may speake I will me speede;
Ye know well, how, on Seynte Valentine's Daye,
By my statute and through my governance
Ye doe chose youre mates, and after fle away,
With hem as I prickle you with pleasaunce."

Herrick, in his "Hesperides," bears witness to the same belief, thus:

Oft have I heard both youth and virgins say
Birds chuse their mates, and couple too, this day.

So does also Shakespeare, in his *Midsummer Night's Dream*:

St. Valentine is past;
Begin these wood birds but to couple now?

Country people also seem to have imagined that an influence was inherent in the day, which rendered in some degree binding the lot or chance by which any youth and maid were now thrown together. It was supposed that the first unmarried person of the other sex whom one saw or met on the morning of the fourteenth of February, was a destined wife or a destined husband. Gay says:

And the first swain we see,
In spite of fortune, shall our true love be.

The ancient Romans, on the fifteenth of February, commenced the festival of Lupercalia in honour of the deities Pan and Juno; and among the rites practised in honour of the goddess, it was customary for the names of young women to be placed in a box, from which they were drawn by the young men, and claimed as brides. This custom gave rise not merely to harmless flirtations, but to disgraceful orgies; and when Christianity's benign influence

had driven out Paganism, it is supposed that the early pastors, protesting against the former, substituted saints for deities, and selected St. Valentine's Day for the festival of Pan and Juno.

Another authority says that the clergy under St. Valentine instituted lotteries, with the names of saints instead of the young folks. Whichever be correct, it is certain that the custom once begun has gradually grown, until, at the present time, in all civilised countries, the martyred Bishop has the credit of knitting together any number of palpitating hearts. At the various European Courts, during Carnival times, which usually occurred on or about St. Valentine's Day, jousts and feasts were held, and each lady was wont to make choice from the assembled knights of one who bound himself to do her bidding and render her all honourable service during the ensuing year.

In England, as far back as the fourteenth century, a favourite pastime amongst the nobility and gentry, on this saint's day, was to choose for themselves Valentines. John Lydgate, the monk of Bury, refers to this custom in a poem written in praise of Queen Catherine:

Seynte Valentine, of custome yeere by yeere,
Men have a usance in this region

To loke and serche Cupide's Calendare,
And chose theyre choyce by grete affecioun;
Such as ben pricke with Cupide's Mocioun.

Takeynge theyr choyce as theyr sort dostie falle
But I love on whiche excellith alle.

Drayton wrote a charming dedication to his Valentine, from which the following is extracted:

Muse, bid the morn awake!
Sad winter now declines,
Each bird doth choose a make
This day's Saint Valentine's;
For the good Bishop's sake
Get up, and let us see,
What beauty it shall be
That fortune us assigns.
Each little bird this tide
Doth choose her loved peer,
Which constantly abide
In wedlock all the year;
As nature is their guide,
So may we two be true
This year, nor change for new,
As turtles coupled were.
Let's laugh at them that choose
Their Valentines by lot,
To wear their names that use
Whom idly they have got.
Such poor choice we refuse;
Saint Valentine befriend
We thus this morn may spend.
Else, Muse, awake her not.

Some authors attribute the origin of Valentines to Madame Royal, the daughter of Henry the Fourth, King of France, who, it is said, built a palace at Turin, which she

called "The Valentine," and, at the opening of it ordered that the ladies should cast lots for lovers, reserving to herself the right of choosing her own.

I think, however, the reader will agree with me that there can be but little doubt of both the custom and cognomen of Valentines existing long before Madame Royal's day. The origin of sending Valentines, again, is generally attributed to Charles, Duke of Orleans, who was made prisoner in 1415, at the battle of Agincourt. The reason for their being called Valentines is probably because he sent the first of these billets doux on St. Valentine's Day. The Duke of Orleans having set the example it was quickly followed, not only by gentlemen, but by ladies likewise.

In that very quaint record of domestic life in England during the reign of Charles the Second, Pepys's Diary, I find some rare illustrations of the customs then practised on St. Valentine's Day. It would appear that married and single alike were equally liable to be chosen as a Valentine, and that a present was regularly given to the party making the choice. In his Diary, February 14th, 1667, Mr. Pepys made this entry: "This morning came up to my wife's bedside (I being up dressing myself) little Will Mercier to his Valentine, and brought her name written on blue paper, in letters of gold, done by himself, very pretty; and we were both pleased with it. But I am also this year my wife's Valentine, and it will cost me five pounds, but that I must have laid out had we not been Valentines." Two days later he makes this further entry: "I find that Mrs. Pierce's little girl is my Valentine, she having drawn me; which I was not sorry for, it easing me of something more that I must have given to others. But here I do first observe the fashion of drawing of mottoes as well as names, so that Pierce, who drew my wife, did draw also a motto, and their girl drew another for me. What mine was I forget, but my wife's was 'most courteous and most fair,' which, as it may be used, or an anagram upon each name, might be very pretty." Noticing soon afterwards the jewels worn by the celebrated Miss Stewart, subsequently Duchess of Richmond, he writes: "The Duke of York, being once her Valentine, did give her a jewel of about eight hundred pounds; and my Lord Mandeville, her Valentine this year, a ring of about three hundred pounds." These presents were probably given to relieve the obligation

under which the being drawn as Valentine had placed the donors.

Shakespeare, Chaucer, Drayton, and Donne, all refer to this festival, but none by a line which would infer that in their day it was in any respect similar to the anniversary it became after cheap postage enabled anyone to gratify his or her longing in this direction. The drawing of Valentines was at this period the only form it took. In Drayton's day ladies, single or married, could be drawn, though, it ought to be added, the selection entailed nothing more serious than certain gifts from the gentleman drawing them, as is mentioned in the quotation from Pepys's Diary.

Hone, in his "Commonplace Book," records that he was in a rural village in Scotland on a fourteenth of February, whither he had, in company with a friend, wandered and lost his way. In this predicament they knocked at the door of a modest mansion and asked for shelter. He proceeds: "The good man heard our story, welcomed us to a seat beside the blazing fire of wood and turf, and appeared delighted with our coming. We found ourselves in the house of rendezvous for the lads and lasses of a neighbouring village to celebrate St. Valentine's Eve. Our entrance had damped the pleasantries, and inquisitive eyes were directed towards us. It was our business to become familiar with our new acquaintances, and the pastimes were renewed. Our sudden appearance had disturbed the progress of the village schoolmaster, who had finished writing on small slips of paper the names of each of the blooming lasses of the village. Each lad had dictated the name of her he loved; these precious slips of paper were now put into a bag and well mixed together, and each youth drew out a ticket, with hope that it might, and fear lest it should not, be the name of his sweetheart. This was repeated three times; the third time was the conclusion of the sport. Some drew beloved names the third time with rapturous joy, others drew names of certain respectable widows and old ladies of the village, introduced by the art of the schoolmaster, and the victims mourned their unpitied derided sufferings. After the lasses the names of the young men were written and drawn by the girls in the same way, and a threefold success was secretly hailed as a suretyship of bearing the name of the fortunate youth. The drawing of this lottery was succeeded by

the essence of the amusement, for the Valentines were to be 'relieved.' The relieving of the Valentines was a scene of high amusement. Each young man had a right to kiss the young girl whose name he drew, and at the same time to deliver up to her the slip of paper. The mirth of this ceremony was excessive. Those who were drawn and were not present, were to be relieved with a gift of inconsiderable value, as a token of regard."

In Derbyshire farm-houses, on the morning of this day, a custom once prevailed for girls to peep through the keyholes of the doors before opening them. If fortune were kind, and they saw a cock and hen in company, the omen was so favourable that it might be taken for granted the person most interested would be married before the year was out. At Scalford, near Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, it was customary for the young girls of the village, on the morning of St. Valentine's Day, to visit the residents and solicit pins, intoning the following words:

Good morrow, Valentine;
All the pins and points are mine.

The residents used to procure pins for the occasion. I have not heard that such a custom ever attached to any other village, and it commenced, I should think, at the time when pins were both scarce and expensive. At many places—notably Up-pingham and Great Easton—a custom still prevails of having plum-buns on St. Valentine's Day. These are called "shittles," from being the same shape as a weaver's shuttle.

"Tawnay" breaking was also formerly carried on at Great Easton or its immediate locality. It was customary also there to make presents on the day, and little girls still go a-begging. An old nursery rhyme says:

Good morrow, Valentine,
Set your hopper down by mine.

The hopper is that in which the husbandman carries his seed when sowing corn.

At Caldecott, it was the custom to make and distribute plum-cakes on this day.

At Swaffham, in Norfolk, it was customary to send Valentines on the eve of this day. At a convenient opportunity the door was slyly opened, and the Valentine, attached to an apple or an orange, thrown in. A loud rap was then given, and the amateur postman took to his heels. A further refinement of the fun, partaking of a First of April joke, was practised by

chalking a white imitation of a letter on a door-step, which some unwary maiden might stoop to pick up.

A writer in a weekly paper says: "The nicest and most sensible way of keeping the festival of St. Valentine is that practised at Norwich. It is observed there as a time of general giving and receiving of gifts, and, indeed, to some extent takes the place of Christmas in this respect. As soon as it gets dark on St. Valentine's Eve, the inmates of the house are roused by a tremendous knock at the front door. On its being opened a large parcel is seen lying on the step, which is at once picked up and carried in. It is directed in an unrecognised scrawl to the eldest girl, and is labelled perhaps, 'With Wallentine's luv,' evidently by someone who does not know how to spell. Wrapper after wrapper is taken off, until the table is covered with brown paper and string, and then a little box, containing some pretty article of jewellery, is reached, which the young lady at once declares is from 'father.' So the fun goes on for the whole night—first back, then front, door is assailed."

Sometimes more comical presents are sent. A gentleman made his wife a present of a feather bed, and didn't the big man enjoy the joke as he stood in the shadow outside and watched his little wife trying to tug the great unwieldy thing into the hall?

Also, surprises too may happen when a person ignorant of the custom makes a call on the evening. Such a one, just arrived in the city, on knocking at the house of a friend, was startled by the door flying open very suddenly and a young lady bending down and seizing his legs. That must have been an embarrassing surprise to both parties.

In some districts the village children go about in companies singing:

Good morrow, Valentine!
First it's yours and then it's mine,
So please give me a Valentine.

This triplet is varied in other places as follows:

Good morrow, Valentine,
Curl your locks as I do mine,
Two before and one behind.

Shakespeare alludes to the belief in St. Valentine's love powers by making Ophelia sing:

"Good morrow! 'tis Valentine's Day,
All in the morning betime,
And I, a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.

The real ceremony, however, of this day,

was with our ancestors, the drawing of the lottery, which was driven out on the introduction of the penny post. The names of a select number of one sex were, by an equal number of the other, put into some bowl or vessel, after which everyone drew a name, which for the present was called his Valentine, and was looked upon as a good omen of their eventually becoming man and wife. Fortune having thus divided the company into so many couples, the Valentines were expected to give balls and treats to their mistresses, and wear their billets somewhere about their person. These imaginary engagements often led to real ones, as for a whole year the bachelor remained bound to the service of his Valentine; and thus, what was begun in sport ended frequently in earnest. In some places it is the custom for children to catch each other for Valentines; and if there are elderly persons in the family who are likely to prove liberal, great care is taken to catch them. The mode of catching is by saying, "Good morrow, Valentine," and if they can repeat this before they are spoken to, they are rewarded with a small gift. It must, however, be done before sunrise, otherwise, instead of a reward, they are told they are sunburnt, and are sent away in disgrace.

The following is from the pen of a "Miss," in the "Connoisseur," a series of essays published from 1754 to 1756. "Last Friday was Valentine's Day, and the night before I got five bay leaves, and pinned four of them to the four corners of my pillow, and the fifth to the middle; and then, if I dreamt of my sweetheart, Betty said we should be married before the year was out. But to make it more sure I boiled an egg hard, and took out the yolk, and filled it with salt; and when I went to bed ate it, shell and all, without speaking or drinking after it. We also wrote our lovers' names on bits of paper, and rolled them up in clay, and put them into water; and the first that rose up was to be our Valentine. Would you think it? Mr. Blossom was my man. I lay a-bed and shut my eyes all the morning, till he came to our house, for I would not have seen another man before him for all the world."

A poet in the "British Apollo" asks:

Why's Valentine a day to choose
A mistress, and our freedom lose?
May I my reason interpose,
The question with an answer close?
To imitate we have a mind,
And couple like the winged kind.

The Princess Elizabeth of England was

married on the fourteenth of February, 1614, to Frederick, Count Palatine of the Rhine, thus founding our present line of sovereigns. In reference to this event Donne, the poet of the day, wrote:

Hail, Bishop Valentine! whose day this is;
All the air is thy diocese,
And all the chirping choristers
And other birds are thy parishoners;
Thou marryest every year
The lyric lark, and the grave whispering dove;
The sparrow that neglects his life for love,
The household bird with the red stomacher;
Thou mak'st the blackbird speed as soon
As doth the goldfinch or the halcyon—
This day more cheerfully than ever shine,
This day, which might inflame thyself, old Valentine.

In Western Europe, during the festival of Saint or Angel Isfendarmey, the especial guardian of the fair sex, which, strangely enough, occurred on the fourteenth of February, maidens might, without being considered indelicate, pay their addresses to whomsoever they pleased, and as the Saint or Angel was believed to regard all contracts entered into during the festival with particular favour, it need hardly be stated that many—very many—engagements and marriages resulted therefrom. It would almost appear that the observance of the day has now reached its highest pitch, the exception being not to send Valentines to the loved ones. One change, however, is gradually taking place: whereas the Valentine was originally a written piece of verse or a compliment, next a gaudy print, afterwards a mass of lace-work and scented paper, it is now developing with amazing rapidity into an article of use or real ornament—chiefly the former. I do not know who is the author, but I picked up a newspaper cutting not long since which fairly represents my own views. The writer says:

I think if old Saint Valentine but knew
The way his fête day now's commemorated;
And if the strange productions met his view
That fill our picture shops, at any rate he'd
Be much amused, and no doubt marvel too,
At fame he surely scarce anticipated—
A fame as great as any of the sages
Of Greece, or Rome, or of the Middle Ages.

I wonder what his saintship had to do
With flaming hearts, or with a cooling dove,
With little bows and arrows, and the true
Entangled lovers' knots (fit type of love);
With chubby flying Cupids, peeping through
The leaves of roses or through clouds above,
Daintily sketched on paper with lace edges,
To be, perhaps, of timid love the pledges?

Long live thy memory, great Saint Valentine,
Still lend thy ancient name to lovers' lays,
And with thy spirit animate each line;
And still may poets celebrate thy praise,
And yearly help to make that name of thine
"Familiar in our mouths," as Shakespeare says,
As "Household Words." This wish is loyal, too,
For Valentines increase the revenue.

Lamb, in his "Essays of Elia," thus refers to this day of universal love. "Hail to thy returning festival, old Bishop Valentine! Great immortal go between! Who and what manner of person art thou? Art thou but a name, typifying the restless principle which impels poor humans to seek perfection in union? or wert thou indeed a mortal prelate, with thy tippet and thy rochet, thy apron on, and decent lawn sleeves? Mysterious personage! like unto thee, assuredly there is no other mitred father in the calendar; not Jerome, nor Ambrose, nor Cyril; nor the consigner of undipped infants to eternal torments, Austin, whom all mothers hate; nor he who hated all mothers, Origen; nor Bishop Bull; nor Archbishop Parker; nor Whitgift. Thou comest attended with thousands and ten thousands of little loves, and the air is

Brush'd with the kiss of nestling wings.

Singing Cupids are thy choristers and thy precentors; and instead of the crosier the mystical arrow is borne before thee. In other words this is the day on which those charming little missives, yclept Valentines, cross and intercross each other at every street and turning. . . .

"Not many sounds in life—and I include all urban and rural sounds—exceed in interest the knock at the door. It 'gives a very echo to the throne where Hope is seated.' But its issues seldom answer to this oracle within. It is so seldom that just the person we want to see comes. But of all the clamorous visitations the welcomest in expectation is the sound that ushers in, or seems to usher in, a Valentine. As the raven himself was hoarse that announced the fatal entrance of Duncan, so the knock of the postman on this day is light, airy, confident, and befitting one that bringeth good tidings. It is less mechanical than on other days. You will say, 'This is not the post, I am sure.' Visions of Love, of Cupids, of Hymens!—delightful, eternal commonplaces, which, having been, will always be; which no schoolboy or schoolman can write away; having your irreversible throne in the fancy and affections. What are your transports when the happy maiden, opening with careful fingers, careful not to break the emblematical seal, bursts upon the sight of some well-designed allegory, some type, some youthful fancy, not without verses:

Lovers all,
A madrigal,

or some such device, not over abundant in sense—young love disclaims it—and not quite silly; something between wind and water, a chorus where the sheep might almost join the shepherd, as they did, or, as I apprehend they did, in Arcadia . . . 'Good morrow to my Valentine,' sings poor Ophelia; and no better wish, but with better auspices, we wish to all faithful lovers, who are not too wise to despise old legends, but are content to rank themselves humble diocesans of old Bishop Valentine and his true Church."

An amusing specimen of the Valentine of fifty years ago has been preserved in the form of a verse sent by a young man of the name of Cook to his sweetheart, who rejoiced in the name of Crozier:

I would I were a Bishop,
The reason you may guess;
For if a Bishop I could be,
A Crozier I'd possess.

The young lady, equally witty with him she had enslaved, promptly retorted that she did

Not wish your plan success;
The reason you may see;
For though a Crozier you'd possess,
I but a Cook should be.

HOW CANARIES CAME TO SAINT ANDREASBERG.*

It is a great thing with those who pique themselves on race to say that they "came over with the Conqueror." The Canary birds can claim a considerable antiquity, and also came over with the Conqueror, though not Norman William. The first hint that can be found in Europe of the forbears of our yellow favourites, who "discourse sweet music" to us winter and summer alike, is in Spain, where we are told that, in 1478, some specimens were brought by Henry the Navigator, on his return from one of his voyages, during which he had landed at the Canary Islands. Though very unlike most of the canaries we now see in cages (for in colour they rather resembled the linnet, a gray shading into green on the breast), they soon were sought after for their song, and high prices were paid for them by the Spanish ladies. The Spanish bird-fanciers soon began to breed from them; and as only the cocks, or singing birds, were for some time brought to Europe they now and then conveyed some

* See ALL THE YEAR ROUND, vol. xxxix., p. 11.

of the cocks to the Canary Islands to act as decoys for the female birds. It is said that these travelled birds were very healthy. The Spaniards were carefully reticent about their Canary song-bird; and for a long period canaries were to be had only from Spain at high prices.

In 1622 a book was written about them, and published in Rome, and in it we read that accident, and not generosity, put an end to this monopoly. A ship that carried a consignment of canaries on board, was wrecked on the Italian coast, and many of the birds escaping flew to the Island of Elba, where the climate suited them very well, and they bred and flourished. The Italians soon found this out, and were so eager for the birds that, in the course of some years, they were exterminated there; but not till the Italians had produced some good breeds. As the Italians were not quite so secretive as the Spaniards, the people in the Tyrol soon shared the knowledge, and passed it on to the Germans and other Northern nations.

In the seventeenth century, the mining population at Imst, in Oberinntal, were specially noted for their cleverness and skill in training the canary, and as, fortunately, the demand grew with the increase of the supply, most of the inhabitants (not being very liberally paid for mining-work) devoted themselves, in their spare time, to the songsters. Guilds were, in course of time, formed to organise and extend the traffic. The members subscribed so much, and the common fund was devoted to procuring the very finest birds from distant parts. Certain of the men were chosen as deputies or representatives to travel abroad and sell the birds; and year after year they went forth, arrayed in their gay costumes, with the well-trained young birds, in large baskets, expressly made for the purpose, on their shoulders. In course of time, they travelled throughout Germany, and, by-and-by, extended their journeys to France, Switzerland, Belgium, and Holland; venturing at last even into Russia, Turkey, Syria, and Armenia.

For nearly a century this went on; and, if in Imst the highest possible song-powers of the bird were not developed, much was done to increase his beauty of form, of plumage, of colour, though, as yet, it must be confessed, our familiar yellow bird was not in existence. That was a work of time and care, and illustrates well Mr. Darwin's doctrine of selection, as we shall soon see.

The title of "Tyrolese bird," often given to the canary, has thus a definite historical meaning. But there were bad as well as good canary years; and, unfortunately, a series of bad canary years came along with a sudden and almost total failure of the mining at Imst. This led to many changes, and finally to a movement of the bulk of the population of Imst to Saint Andreasberg in the Harz, where mining was then actively carried on. The trainers brought their birds with them, and continued, as at Imst, to carry on their training in their spare time. Soon it was in many ways improved, and more attention devoted to the development of the song-power. Difficulties, so far as the canary-training was concerned, arose in unexpected ways, and, curiously enough, from a strong love of birds in the native Saint Andreasbergers. They were enthusiastic in their love of finches and thrushes. There was hardly a house in the town, we learn, but had its wicker cage at the door with a finch or thrush in it. The canary, like all fine singers, is very imitative of the songs of other birds it may hear, when young and under training; and it was not desirable that they should hear or follow the notes of finches or thrushes. This made the work of the canary-trainers difficult, and demanded care. But it also stimulated thought, and suggested new methods. Out of every disadvantage profit is born to perseverance and skill. The canary-trainers had now to isolate their birds more and more; and in this isolation were led more and more to a study of individual character and temperament, and thus learned some of the secrets of the craft which, for so long a period, has made them pre-eminent in their strange industry. They found out, not only how to guard their birds from coarser notes, but how to inspire them to higher efforts by emulation and the force of trained example, and by the use of darkened bowers or boxes during a special period of confinement, in which the trainer was seldom for an hour absent from them, night or day. It was in this way that canary-breeding began in Saint Andreasberg, and what was begun so long ago is carried on to this day, though not so much money is now made, canaries being carefully bred in other places in Germany.

It was thus from the Tyrolese bird, further trained in the Harz, that the Germans, the Belgians, the Dutch, and the English created the leading distinct breeds, which are now known the world

over, with all their perplexing varieties, which are not so well known. Each nation has acted on a different point of the bird. The Dutch altered chiefly the figure and developed tufty lines of feathers (and of this breed the Parisians were at one time so fond that they have been miscalled "Parisian canaries"); the Belgians developed the shoulder peculiarity, or as some (not, perhaps, experienced fanciers) would call it, deformity, and have produced what have been called "Under-takers"; the English have principally studied the colour; and to the Germans is due the credit of carrying the song-training to the point of science. England has the credit of the largest, longest, and heaviest birds. The Norwich crested canaries are very quaint, and the Norwich even-marked, with what are called "spectacle eye marks," or dark patches round the eyes, are very beautiful; while the Manchester Coppy, with his lovely crest on the head, and thicker, longer tuft over the beak, is perhaps the most magnificent. The Lizards, again, dark-green on the back, with brilliant spangles from the neck, and growing larger as they descend, are the richest and most varied in colour; and the London Fancy, all yellow save some of its wing and tail feathers, which are black, is perhaps the neatest and most compact. But individual taste has much to do with any judgement on these points.

With regard to the yellow colour, and its testimony to Mr. Darwin's theory, it is said that, after domestication in Belgium, Germany, and England (a point with which temperature or climate may have had something to do), the birds threw up on the feathers small patches of yellow of lighter colour; and by carefully matching those birds that had the largest number of these patches, the breeders at length, and after a considerable period, succeeded in obtaining bright and uniform yellow colour, more closely resembling what are called the "clear" birds of to-day. But the application of the phrase, "canary-colour," to indicate a special shade of yellow, though general, is not justified by the facts. Canaries of pure breed are to be found of many colours. Whole breeds are green; and, by feeding on pepper and other seeds, canaries have been produced of cinnamon, and coffee colour, and even of red; and, in the Lizard variety, as we have seen, the bird, though yellow in the crown, is elsewhere shaded and spangled in the most lovely manner.

But pure yellow birds had been produced before the beginning of the eighteenth century, for it was the custom of ladies of fashion, on receiving visitors, to have the yellow bird perched on the left arm; and we have good evidence of this in the fact that some of them had their portraits painted in this manner by artists of note.

The rapidly-increasing demand for the bird, and the competition which has thus been excited, have done not a little to injure the training. It has become less a matter of pastime and pleasure and more of a mere trade. The birds are now turned out wholesale—treated in mass, without the nice regard to individual traits and possibilities, which alone can produce the best results. And in St. Andreasberg (the "Canary Mecca," as it has been called, which every lover of the canary must visit once at least in his lifetime) we are sorry to say this is already too much the case, though nowhere else will so many fine stocks be found within so limited a space.

Good birds from the Harz race are now produced in Berlin, in Hanover, and on the Rhine, and the only means by which the St. Andreasbergers can maintain their pre-eminence, is to go back to their old ways and traditions. A select few of their trainers have fortunately remained faithful to these.

The St. Andreasberg trainers, of the best days, have the merit of having developed to its highest pitch the natural song of the bird. They dispensed with all artificial aids like bird-organs or pipes, such as have sometimes been brought into use elsewhere, only with the result of clumsy imitation. Only by such methods of isolation, dark bowers, strict individual treatment, could the song of the canary have become so refined and rich, and still have retained its natural freshness and spontaneity. On their method, the young birds, according to their age and capacity, were brought into proximity with birds of higher and higher culture, and heard only their song from day to day, till they formed themselves upon it.

It is astonishing how persevering and devoted these young birds are. When they hear any song fresh and new to them, they listen closely, and then endeavour to reproduce it, trying again and again till they succeed. It is part of the business of the trainer—and a most important part too—to remove any bird that shows any fault in temper or in voice; and

the different characters to be found among canary birds are just as marked and contrasted as among human beings: some being calm and self-controlled, and others restless, irritable, and apt to become loud and screechy in voice. These, when they show possibilities, need to be much longer kept in the dark chamber than others, and demand less indulgence in egg diet and, indeed, in stimulating food of any kind; and must even be allowed, in any circumstances, less of the strong sunlight, and not suddenly exposed to it.

From St. Andreasberg about twenty thousand singing cocks are exported per annum, representing an income of two hundred thousand marks, or about ten thousand pounds, and as the place has between three and four thousand inhabitants, it is evident that canary-training is not a source of very large revenue to a good many persons there. Many nations that love the canary do not care to breed and train him, and there is no doubt that the demand will increase instead of falling off. It may be mentioned, however, that the Chinese and Japanese, with their usual enterprise and readiness for work of this kind, have made a beginning, and may possibly do something noticeable by-and-by. Even the nations which have gained a speciality for breeding, still import largely from Germany. That the above statements are correct, is proved by the following figures: in 1882, singing canary cocks were imported from Germany to New York, one hundred and twenty thousand; to South America, ten thousand five hundred; to Australia, five thousand six hundred; to South Africa, three thousand; to France, thirty thousand; to Belgium, thirty thousand; to England, thirty thousand; to Russia, thirty thousand; to Austria, thirty thousand. America, which has not yet shown any tact for training or love for it, is by far the largest customer; and it is a fact that there the canary bird is now as necessary an adjunct to the log hut as to the drawing-room of the mansion in town or country.

No doubt many will be surprised to learn that a trade so extensive in these birds has existed for so long a time—for centuries indeed; and it may equally surprise them to know that some of our favourite English breeds—such as the London Fancy, the Lizard, the Norwich Clear, and others—have been known for so long a period that no detail of their introduction or first appearance can be found.

In a work dated 1709 as many as twenty-eight varieties are named, comprising nearly all those known at the present time. The love of the canary is thus very old; and there is no doubt that it is growing—one good fashion, at least, in which we follow our forefathers. In this conviction we may be permitted to quote the following beautiful stanzas from the pen of Robert Leighton, a fine poet, who died too young:

Overhead in the lattice high
Our little golden songster hung,
Singing, piping merrily,
With dulcet throat and clipping tongue;
Singing from the peep of morning
To the evening's closing eye.
When the sun in blue was burning,
Or when clouds shut out the sky:
Foul or fair, morn, eve, or noon,
Its little pipe was still in tone.

Its breast was filled with fairy shells
That gave sweet echo to its note,
And strings of tiny silver bells
Rang with the pulsings of its throat;
Song all through its restless frame,
Its very limbs were warbling strings:
I well believe that music came
E'en from the tipplings of its wings;
Piping early, late and long,
Mad with joy and drunk with song,
Oh, welcome to thy little store,
Thy song repays it o'er and o'er.

THE SHEPHERD OF THE SALT LAKE.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II.

THE mulga ridges round the Salt Lake—before so silent—resounded with the ring of the axe, the thud of the mawl, the metallic clink of hammered wedges, and the dull grating of the cross cut saw. Fallen trees marked the projected line of fencing; then the square post-holes, dug out at regular intervals, showed a further stage of progress; and then the short posts themselves sprang into existence in a long straight line, which every day was added to and lengthened.

During two months of hot summer weather the work was carried on bravely, and Scotty's solitude was shared by the fencers and the mother and child. The long summer days, odorous with the breath of the hops and wattle-blossom fled by; the mulga ridges lost their green, and assumed a sober brown hue more in harmony with the dark red soil; the dark-hued mulga trees drooped list-

lessly before the remorseless heat; the giant box-trees exuded a dark crimson gum, that hung in semi-transparent drops like clots of thickened blood; and still the white tent of the fencers and the hut of the shepherd stood near together by the edge of the Salt Lake.

And the long days had not fled by without bringing other changes in their train. To the lonely life of poor old Scotty they brought a fresh interest—a new experience. He learned to love the little being, who had come and awakened him by her childish presence and her young grief from his long lethargy. He came to love the sound of her voice, the sight of her thin figure, the touch of her hand. And, strange to say, the little girl returned his liking. She was never tired of wandering with him behind the straggling flock, talking in a quaint way to the quiet sheep, who grew to know her. Oftentimes she would pass the day with her father and Larry at their work; but she did not like the noise of the chopping and hammering. It made her head ache, and she was always glad to get away from it. She liked watching her father dig the square post-holes, and passed many an hour counting the mulga-posts and taking long glances over their tops to see if they were quite in a straight line. She liked being with her mother, too, when she did not make her do lessons, and when she was not ill. But it was always one thing or the other.

When her mother was well enough, she would invariably set her to spelling and reading; and then, when she was ill, and lying in bed, it was so dull in the tent, little Lizzie was always glad to get out into the fresh odorous air. Yes, she liked best of all to accompany old Scotty in his slow wanderings with his flock, resting with him in the shade, talking to the sheep, listening to his rambling stories, which she would hardly understand, but which exercised a strange fascination over her, for they were all of the old convict days. That was what she liked best, for they were days full of novel experiences for her. At first, aroused by the new element that had entered into his life, the old shepherd had thrown off, in some measure, the apathy and supineness that characterised him. In his companionship with the little girl he became more animated than he had been for years. He tried to amuse her to the best of his powers. He puzzled his failing memory for recollections of past experiences to tell her; he got her bush

flowers and pretty heaths; dug up edible roots for her; took her to where quandongs and chucky-chuckies grew, and helped her to fill her apron with the priceless fruits. He had acquired, during former years of his lonely life, something more than an ordinary skill in carving with his clasp knife, and this he returned to, after many years of disuse, cutting out for her all manner of curious toys and knick-knacks. He even deftly carved the quandong stones and made a necklace of them for her—a task of the utmost delicacy, that took him almost a month to accomplish. It was no wonder little Lizzie liked being with Scotty and the sheep. Nobody was so kind to her as the old shepherd; nobody knew how to amuse her so well.

And so the days fled, and the golden wattle and the hop blossoms began to fall, breaking out a sweeter fragrance in dying; and the peppermint trees, and the resinous pines, and the bleaching gum leaves, loaded the summer air with a pungent redolence. The spicy air of the mulga ridges had brought something like a flush of health to little Lizzie's pale cheeks during those two months; the evening breezes, sweeping across the Salt Lake, and laden with its saline emanations, had not carried a blight with them, but had strengthened the weakly child and benefited her.

"I'm not frightened of the Salt Lake now," she said one day to old Scotty, when both were reposing under a clump of emu-bush near its edge, idly watching the camping sheep. "I don't think there's a blight on it now. Perhaps it's gone away."

"No, no," he answered, shaking his head. "It's here, sure enough."

"But mother says it's making me strong."

"Aye; it did me good at first, too. But it got hold of me and broke me down afterwards."

The child looked curiously at him.

"Mother said I wasn't to believe it at all," she said, after a pause. "She says it's wicked to talk like that."

"Maybe," he answered, shaking his head a second time. "I don't know. But there's a curse on it for all that."

He gave way to the child in everything, but on that one point nothing could make him speak differently.

"I'm not frightened of it then, see," exclaimed little Lizzie. And, rising from her shady seat under the emu-bush, she ran down towards the lake.

"No, no, don't go there," he cried.

But the child shook her head merrily, and, followed by the old shepherd's dog barking joyously, walked out on to the flat expanse. A little cloud of acrid dust rose at every footstep, and she sank up to her ankles in the light, pervious soil. As she walked out further she went still deeper, and even the dog bounding ahead of her, light weight as he was, sank up to its knees in the yielding mould.

"There, you see," she said, returning breathless with the exertion, "I'm not frightened of it a bit."

"You shouldn't have done it," answered Scotty, shaking his head in a troubled way. "It won't lead to any good. You shouldn't have done it."

Towards sundown the two companions made their way back to the camp at the tail of the slowly moving flock. The sun going down at the far end of the Salt Lake cast a blinding glare over the treeless waste. The salty incrustations that spread in dirty white patches over its surface flashed crimson, as though the earth were stained with blood; the glaucous pig-weed and the darker ti-tree bushes took a strange unnatural brilliance; even the discoloured limestone rocks at the edge became sublimated by the crimson glamour. Slowly the bleating flock made its way homeward over the mulga ridges, the man and the child following with the dog at their heels. The glowing sunshine transfused the long avenues of the bush with a soft radiance; the birds and insects, rousing themselves after the heat of the day, filled the air with sound; the spicy odours distilled by the heat from tree and flower made the air languorous and heavy; from the dried herbage, crushed by the feet of the moving sheep, arose a fainter perfume.

"Oh!" sighed the child, half-unconsciously, as the white gleam of the tent was seen in the distance, "what a long, long, beautiful day! The sun's nearly down. How beautiful it all is! Oh, I wish it could go on like this for ever and ever!"

That same evening, as old Scotty sat alone at his solitary hearth, the two fencers entered the hut.

"We've just been putting little Liz to bed," said Duke. "She was that tired, happy-like, she could hardly hold her head up."

"She do enjoy herself all day long," said his mate. "It's wonderful what she nds to amuse her. She was singin' away

like a young chirrup, almost until she went off."

"Yes?" said Scotty eagerly. "She's asleep, is she?"

"Sound as a bell."

"Ah, that's it, that's it," he murmured.

"She'll be awake and bright to-morrow."

"See here, Scotty," said Duke thoughtfully. "Larry and me have come because we've something to tell you. We're goin' away."

"What? Going away?" he cried, letting his pipe fall to the ground in his sudden dismay. "No, no; you're not going to take the child. You won't take her from me."

"We must go. Leastways I must, and it's no good Larry stopping alone. My missus has been ailin' a good bit since we came here, and she's close on her confinement. I won't risk it without a doctor this time. If she'd been all right she'd have got through it well enough, but she ain't. I'm going to take her in the dray to Gidanga, where she can be attended to. It wouldn't be any good Larry stopping alone—he couldn't do much, so he's coming along."

"But the child!"

"Well, it's this way," said Duke thoughtfully. "It'll be a rough journey to the township. It must be nigh on eighty miles, and there ain't a track till we get in the river-road, you know. She's a delikit little thing is Liz, and I don't much like the idea of her havin' to rough it. We mean coming back, of course, and finishing the contract; so, seein' as you've grown so fond of her, and she having a liking for you, I thought, if you wanted her, as you might take care of her till we come back. But the missus don't like to part with her, and so we're in a bit of a taking about it."

"Leave her with me," exclaimed Scotty eagerly. "I'll take care of her. She shan't want for nothing."

"That's what I said," interjected Larry. "These mulga ridges is very healthy, and they're doing Liz a tremenj's lot of good. There's no use draggin' her to the township. It's a bad place for children, and the journey 'd knock her up. We'd be back in a month or six weeks most like, and so if Liz is willing to stop, I ses, 'Let her.'"

"Don't take her away. For Heaven's sake don't take her away," cried Scotty.

"Well, I'm for leaving her," answered Duke, "though the missus isn't. We've

been talking over it, and we made up our minds—if you were willing to take charge of the child—to leave it to little Liz herself. If she wants to stop, she can. If she wants to come with us, well then, we'll take her along."

"No, no. She must not go. I'll take care of her. No harm shall come to her. I'll look after her morning and night. See here; I'll give you this if you leave her with me," he cried, fumbling amid the blankets on the bunk. "It's all I have. But here; you shall have it all if you'll leave her."

"Put up your cheque, man," returned Duke, with rough good-nature. "I don't want it. If the child likes, she shall stop with you. I'll leave you plenty of rations for her, and you can look after our camp for us, for we'll leave the tent standing and the tools."

"Yes, yes. Only leave the child with me, and I will do anything you want."

The old shepherd passed a sleepless night. The fear of losing the child worked upon his feeble mind to such an extent, that during the whole of that warm summer night he walked restlessly to and fro in the hut in a fever of hope and fear. With the earliest streak of dawn he was out, waiting impatiently outside the tent of the fencers. An hour later Duke emerged from it.

"You're early," he said.

"The child!" exclaimed Scotty, feverishly.

"Well, I've been talking it over agen with the missus, and she agrees to leavin' Liz here if she wants to stop. So we'll just ask her."

The girl, bright and rosy from her long sleep, emerged from the tent at that moment.

"Come here, little Liz," said the father gravely, "I want to ask you something. Mother and me's going away for a time—going a long way all through the bush. Mother's ill, you know; and I'm going to take her to the doctor's. But we're coming back again soon. Would you like to go

with us, or stay here along with Scotty and the sheep?"

Lizzie's glance wandered from her father's face to the old shepherd. He stood feverishly, tremblingly expectant of the coming answer, with such a look of entreaty in his eyes that her gaze was for the moment arrested. He seemed about to speak, but no sound came from him, only his lips moved convulsively. The child's glance wandered from the shepherd's face to the golden wattle gleaming in the early sunlight, and the hops on their pendent branches waving a mute greeting. The sheep camped in one corner of the bush yards attracted her attention for a moment, but her gaze wandered away to the park-like avenues of graceful mulga trees to the bright green clumps of emu and apple bush, to the dark green of the pines and tall peppermint trees, and to the red mulga ridges. At last her wandering glance rested on the Salt Lake—silent, lifeless, gleaming white and burnished. She gazed at it for a moment in silence, and then she said with strange quietness:

"I'd sooner stay by the Salt Lake, father."

The next day the fencers took their departure, leaving little Lizzie under Scotty's care. Early in the morning the two horses were harnessed to the dray, one in the lead, one between the shafts. Mother and father embraced their daughter for the last time; then Larry cracked his long whip lustily, the harness strained, the heavy wheels creaked slowly round, and Scotty and his little charge were left to the solitude of the Salt Lake.

"Oh, mother! mother!" sobbed Lizzie, as the dray moved off, burying her face in her hands. "I wish I'd gone too."

"No, no," said Scotty, holding her hand tight in his, "you will stop with me and the sheep. We shall be so happy together. And they'll be back soon—very soon." But under his beard he muttered to himself, "She couldn't go. No, no; the Salt Lake has got her the same as me. She can't get away from it."

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